



Nachhaltigkeits Woche Zürich

**Annual Report
2024 – 2025**



Preface - *Short-Termism*

Dear friends of Sustainability Week Zürich,

We live in troubling times. Economic instability threatens livelihoods around the globe, authoritarianism is on the rise, and geopolitical tensions are more severe than they have been in decades. Amid these growing concerns, sustainability is increasingly pushed out of the spotlight. Climate change no longer dominates headlines, public spending on education and welfare is being cut to balance budgets, and scapegoating migration has once again become a convenient political distraction from addressing systemic issues.

At NHWZ we felt the effect of this broader shift firsthand. It has become more difficult to mobilize people around our events and to promote long-term thinking in a world that increasingly focuses on short-term solutions. Rather than surrendering to these difficulties, we chose to face them head-on – which is why we made "Short-Termism" the theme of this year's issue.

To bring sustainability back on the agenda and grab people's attention, we made a bold statement during this year's Sustainability Week in April by setting up two large tents on Polyterrasse. It was a completely new venture for us, logistically complex and demanding, but it paid off. The tents served as visible symbols of our belief that sustainability deserves space in our institutions and the public, both physically and socially. We were blessed with beautiful weather, and the atmosphere throughout the week was immaculate.

In order to make the organisation of the week and the tents on Polyterrasse possible, we aimed to optimize our association's structure and free up more manpower. We decided to dissolve the division of tasks between the Board and the Core Team and instead work together as one big so-called "Lead Team". This change brought its own challenges, but overall it proved successful and brought the team much closer together during the organisation of this year's Sustainability Week. It also allowed us to organise more events during the year apart from Sustainability Week in April, which helped us grow our community and make new connections.

We know that the challenges we face are complex. But complexity should not deter us from principled action. In times of uncertainty, we want to champion a mindset that resists shortcuts and rejects simplistic solutions. We advocate for long-term thinking over quick fixes, for compassion over indifference and cynicism. This is what sustainability means to us, and this is the message we hope to carry forward.

Thank you for being on this journey with us.

Yours sincerely,
the team of Sustainability Week Zürich.

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Events Throughout The Year

Grill & Chill get-togethers

In order to maintain and expand our community, invite potential new members and learn from the experiences of alumni, it has become a “NHWZ-tradition” to host some “Grill-and-chill” barbecues during the summer period. These offer a great opportunity for former, current and potential future event organisers to connect to the main organisers, as well as for curious students to learn more about our association in a casual atmosphere.

Trash-pick-up hike

During the last year, thanks to our enhanced human resources and following our decision to work as one bigger “Lead Team”, we decided to go beyond these traditions. While we hosted a record three barbecue events in Irchel park, we also combined the fun of exercising and the good purpose of cleaning up our environment during a “after-work-trash-pick-up-hike” to the top of Uetliberg. We brought along trash bags and collected all items that should not stay in nature, of which — surprisingly and unfortunately — a lot is found on the hiking trails close to Zurich.



Figure 1: Our team collecting trash as well as of our group after having reached the top

Collaboration with *ESN*

During one of our barbecue events, the president of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) approached us and expressed their association’s desire to host more sustainability-related events connecting international students about this important topic. As we believe that the deep-rooted problems related to climate change and environmental degradation, which

impose moving towards a more sustainable economy and society, can only be overcome by international collaboration and understanding for every nation's interests and concerns, we embraced this suggestion and joined forces to organize two events targeting particularly an international community in a fun and yet educational way:

Sustainability-related Board Game Evening

We organized a board game evening in which we played games with a particular relation to sustainability. For instance, the modernized version of the all time classic “the settlers of Catan - New energies” in which the players can decide to either use fossil fuels for low costs in the game's currency or purchase renewable energy sources at higher costs. These individual player's decisions then imply bad and good consequences for everyone, respectively. We experienced this to be a highly relatable means to make arguments at international climate conferences more comprehensible.

Water Dam Visit

Secondly, we also teamed up with ESN to go on an excursion to the water dam and power plant “La Dixence” in Valais. Ten of our members got the opportunity to not only admire this massive construction but also learn a lot about the possibilities and challenges related to such immense power plants. Did you know that such a stone wall moves several centimeters throughout the year and it requires advanced technology to track this dynamics and maintain safe operation conditions?



Short-Termism Panel Discussion

Lastly, following our intentions to host more events during the entire year, we decided to host a panel discussion after meeting a lot of new faces in our “week preparation” events (see below) for the end of November. Since we believe it is a very topical and important issue, we wanted to discuss “short-termism” with a panel of experts from different fields and simultaneously offer an example to younger / potential event organizers how an event for Sustainability Week could look like.

For this purpose we invited a representative of the “Alternative Bank Switzerland” (Katrin Wohlwend), a representative of the Green-Liberal party Zurich (Nora Ernst), (former) general secretary of the Swiss Green party and expert of digital policies (Dr. Rahel Estermann), as well as a speaker for the “World Wide Fund For Nature” (WWF) (Dr. Ion Karagounis), which allowed to touch on short-term thinking from different perspectives. The event attracted a considerable number of attendees (≈ 40), despite a winter storm breaking out on that very evening which collapsed Zurich’s (and Switzerland’s) transport system.

During this event the speakers had the opportunity to introduce themselves and their perspective on decisions which draw short-term benefits but are harmful in the long-term. During the next 90 minutes the moderators from our Lead Team guided through a discussion with the panelists and then opened up for questions by the committed audience members. An apéro outside of the lecture hall offered an informal atmosphere to continue the discussions and allowing for networking after the formal discussion and Q&A was finished.



Sadly, due to the winter storm that very evening, the confirmed speaker and former general secretary of the Swiss Green party and expert on digital policies Dr. Rahel Estermann was not able to join. However, we plan to incorporate and learn from her expertise in the near future.

Sustainability Week

Organisation

We started the organisation of the Sustainability Week in September last year with Information Events aimed to provide a first point of contact for students who might be interested in organising an event within the framework of the Sustainability Week. Then in the beginning of October we had our annual NHWeekend, which served as an official start to the organisational efforts for this year's issue of Sustainability Week. The NHWeekend took place in a youth hostel on Lake Greifensee. During the weekend, we developed ideas together, brainstormed, and got to know each other better as a group. Following the Weekend we organised several more information events at UZH, ETH and ZHDK to attract event organisers from diverse backgrounds and academic paths, as it is Sustainability Week Zurich's vision to foster events which tackle the topic of sustainability from very diverse perspectives, catalyze new connections, and spark multi-faceted solutions.

To organize the week, we divided ourselves internally into different working groups to cover the various areas:

- **Program:** takes care of the coordination of the event organizers and the program.
- **Marketing:** creating of visual designs to attract the public to our event, both with physical displays in university spaces and on social media.
- **Infrastructure:** coordinated the new concept (tents) as well as the necessary permissions and coordination with the logistical teams from the universities.

The various groups were in close contact to ensure and coordinate the flow of information. Meetings were held regularly for each team, as well as a bi-weekly general meeting with the full Lead Team to discuss bigger points and determine next steps.

Tent Concept

A large part of this year's Sustainability Week event took place in two tents on the Polyterrasse at ETH Zurich. The main motivation was to attract more people and create a festival-like atmosphere. The Polyterrasse is used by many students to linger during breaks and after lectures, so this location seemed ideal for setting up the tents to attract curious students from UZH and ETH who might just be walking by to join one of the numerous events or ask for information about later events at our info-desk.

The larger tent was intended for talks, panel discussions, the FoodSave Lunch, and film screenings, which typically attract the largest number of attendees. We set up a stage to host presentations and panel discussions, and a screen and sound systems on the stage to ensure that speakers can be clearly heard and understood. Furthermore, it allowed to screen movies every evening, which offer a more leisurely way to inform people about diverse sustainability-related topics.

The slightly smaller tent was used exclusively for workshops. It was equipped with tables, flipcharts and chairs.

In between the tents, we created an inviting atmosphere by setting up tables and chairs where students and passers-by could relax and potentially get interested in the events taking place. This area enjoyed high popularity among visitors and organizers alike.

The tent concept could be further exploited as a synergy with ETH Mobility Day (organised by the ETH Mobility Centre with the collaboration of Velove and Provelo), who organized a full day of talks and a second-hand bike fair using Sustainability Week's tents and infrastructure.

The whole week – General Plan

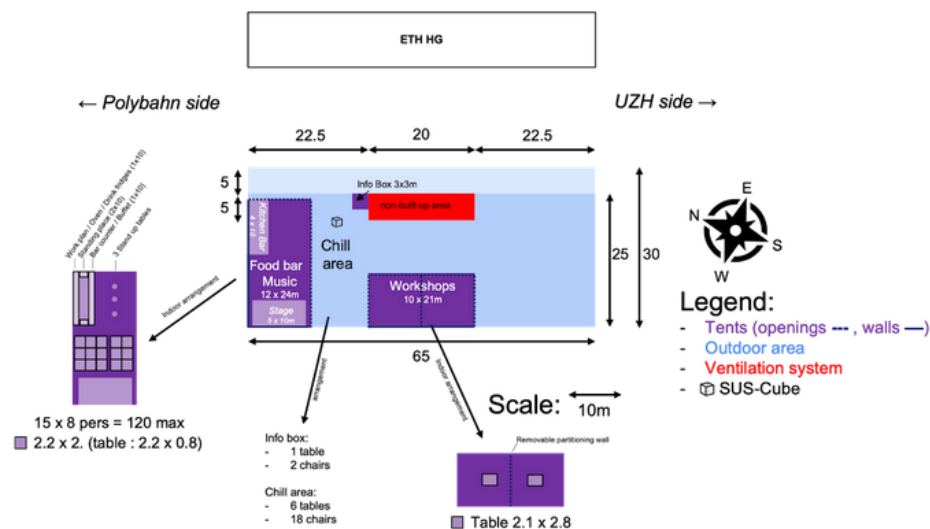
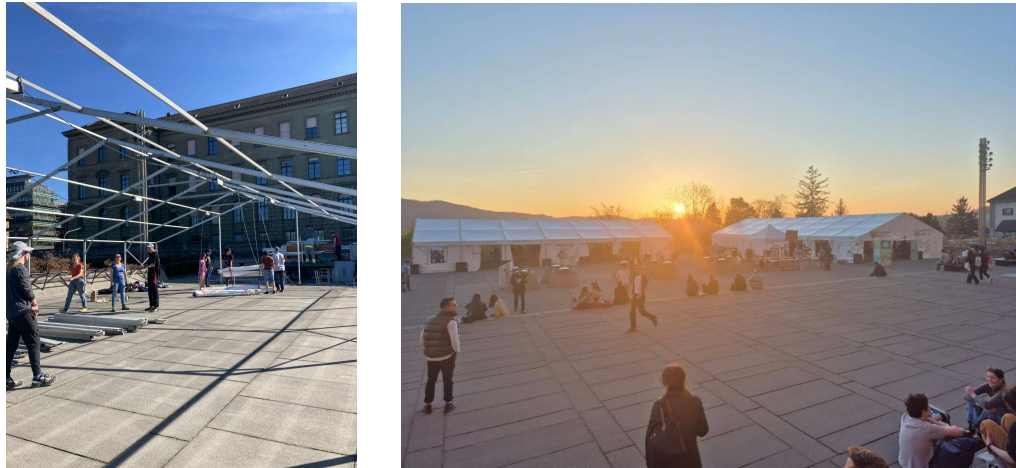


Figure 2: The concept for the tents on Polyterrasse

The tents were erected and dismantled by numerous volunteers (≈ 20) under the supervision of operators from the tent renting company. Volunteers included the members of the Lead Team, event organisers, and people external to Sustainability Week. We want to extend our gratitude to all of them for their generosity, time, and effort, which made the tent concept possible.

To set up the tents, we also worked closely with the ETH to comply with all safety guidelines. Feedback from visitors showed that the tents were very well received and that the tents radiated a presence and thus drew attention to the topic of sustainability. In addition to the larger tents, we also set up a small information tent (info-desk), which serves as a contact point for passers-by and interested parties. We made sure that one of us was always there to provide information about the association, the Sustainability Week and its program.



The Program – April 7 - 11

The Sustainability Week 2025 was held from 7 to 11 April 2025 with a total of 61 events including all day events in English, German or both languages. For the first time in NHWZ history, the week's main venue was on the ETH Polyterrasse, where the majority of the events took place. This proved to be very successful, providing much greater visibility and engagement from students.

In addition, multiple events took place across the different universities and campuses in Zurich: UZH (Zentrum and Irchel), ETH (Zentrum and Hönggerberg), PHZH (Lagerstrasse), ZHAW (Wädenswil and Winterthur) and ZHdK (Toni Areal).

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
all day PHZH Festschau 11-12:30 ETH Veg 13:30-14:45 THW Social Justice concert 11-14 Polyterrasse: Food&Lunch 13-16:30 Polyterrasse: EcoCity 13:30-16:30 Inlet 3d Jan 15-17 Polyterrasse: Social F&L 17-19 Polyterrasse: Demok&die 18-19:30 Polyterrasse: Platin Forestry 18:30-10:30 ETH K&W Breath 10-11:30 Polyterrasse: Pol&is 10-11:45 Polyterrasse: Vel&is	all day PHZH Festschau all day ZHAW Sustainability Day 9-15 Polyterrasse: Polymer& of Rings 10-17 ZHdK Kinder&tsch 11-14 Polyterrasse: Food&Lunch 13:30-14:30 PHZH Out&In Hub 14-15:30 ETH Out&In Hub 17-10:45 ETH Hö&gerberg: Wood, Carpet&is 17-11:30 ETH Sustainability 18-19:30 Polyterrasse: Hot P&is with Sustainability 18-19 Polyterrasse: Be&is Sustainability 19-11:45 Polyterrasse: Vel&is	all day PHZH Festschau 9-10:30 Polyterrasse: Break&is 9-11:30 Inlet Social F&L Work&is 10-17 ZHdK Kinder&tsch 11-14 Polyterrasse: Food&Lunch 11:30-14 PHZH Be&is: Work&is 14-15:30 ETH Repair Café 14:30-17:30 Polyterrasse: Climate Work&is 17-19 ETH Sustainability 18-19 PHZH Nachhalt&is: Ung&is mit Social Media 18-11:45 PHZH Food&is: Kitchen Battle 18:30-10:45 Polyterrasse: K&is Discussion	all day PHZH Festschau 9-17 Polyterrasse: Vel&is 9-11 Inlet Polymer&is Plant&is trees 10-16 Polyterrasse: ETH Hö&gerberg 10-16 Polyterrasse: Inlet&is Coffee 11-14 Polyterrasse: Food&Lunch 13-16:30 Inlet Eco&is 18-18 PHZH Nachhalt&is: P&is: Live 17-19:30 Polyterrasse: Hot P&is: Live 17-19 Inlet Social F&L: Work&is 17-19 Polyterrasse: Cities&is: Swap with Up&is 18-19 Polyterrasse: Sustainable Food&is&is 10-11:45 Polyterrasse: Vel&is	all day PHZH Festschau 9:30-10:30 Vel&is: Social F&L 9:30-17 PHZH Kinder&tsch 11-14 Polyterrasse: Food&is Lunch 13-19 Polyterrasse: 2nd Peak Events 13-17 Inlet Eco&is: in Cities 13-18 PHZH Tool&is: Up&is: A&is 13:30-17 Z&is: St&is: A&is 14-19:30 PHZH Post&is: A&is 17-18:30 Polyterrasse: Sustainable&is 18-Sunday(14:30) Inlet Happiness Retreat 18-open end 21:14 Post-N&is: Party
LANGUAGE	SATURDAY	For more info scan		
all day PHZH Festschau 9-11:30 Post-P&is: Veg&is: Break 14-17:30 Inlet&is: Ring&is: Work&is				

Figure 3: The program for the entire week.

We would like to highlight several events for their novelty, popularity, and variety:

VeloKino: This event screened two movies and two short films related to sustainability over three different nights. The power was generated from the stationary bikes which the viewers get to ride. We were happy to collaborate with Velove for this event. This event drew inspiration from the second film, where the entire production was produced through such bike powered energy, and was held in collaboration with the Velove association, which promotes sustainable mobility as well as fostering a community based on shared resources, tools and knowledge related to bike maintenance and repair.

PubQuiz: The bQm bar right below the Polyterrasse was bustling with people as the PubQuiz began on Monday night. Teams of students joined to answer three rounds of questions which covered different aspects of sustainability. Questions were interesting and entertaining and provided many counter-intuitive answers, sparking interest and follow-up discussions among the numerous attendees.



Velokino



Pubquiz



SustainabiliTEA

FoodSave Lunch: Addressing the problem of waste of food and resources, this was an important event which provided free lunch to students using food collected the previous evening by AKI volunteers through the FoodSharing platform from various restaurants, bakeries, and grocery shops; food that would have otherwise been thrown away despite being perfectly edible. This event aims to draw a direct point to the issue of food-waste, as well as how our daily decisions and habits have a significant impact. Furthermore, it highlight systemic issues: overproduction, lack of awareness, and prioritizing other aspects such as always-full and appetizing shop and restaurant counters over mindful resource usage. Additionally, free breakfast was also provided in connection to this theme.

SustainabiliTEA: We also organised several talks and discussions during the week, including a discussion on the history and commodities such as tea, with deep roots in the colonial past, which still permeate economical and geo-political relationships between western countries and the global south. We invited Dr. Jasnea Sarma, geographer at the University of Zurich, to discuss the place of tea from the Assam region of India in our contemporary world. Throughout the discussion, all the attendees got to enjoy Assam tea which was provided for free during the event. “Come for the chai. Stay for the (geo)politics” was the subtitle, and the discussion went as intended, with a strong focus on social justice and sustainability, and the numerous attendees actively participating throughout the discussion.



Clothes Swap



Velobörse

Clothes Swap: Clothes swaps are a long standing event of Sustainability Week and always popular. This year, several clothes-swap events took place at different locations: PHZH, ZHdK, and the workshop tent in Polyterrasse which attracted a large number of passers-by.

Velobörse: As part of our cooperation with ETH Mobility, we co-hosted the Pro-Velo Velobörse on Polyterrasse. A good opportunity for students to get a nice second-hand bicycle for travelling to and from university.

Closing Party: This year our closing party was organised by a friend organisation, the [PLEIAD Kollektiv](#). Under the motto *Primavera Dreams* we enjoyed the last hours of Sustainability Week dancing together. But our closing party was no regular party! Besides the music, guests could enjoy an art installation, get free haircuts or even get a free tattoo. With their idea of hosting parties centered around the theme of sustainability, PLEIAD won at the [Climathon](#), a climate change related hackathon hosted by the city of Zurich and were so kind to use the prize money to organise what amounted to an awesome night full of dance moves, inspiring arts and good times.

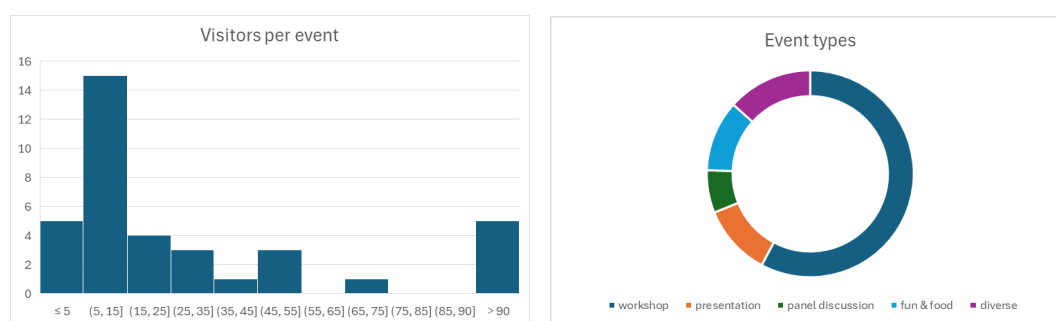


Closing Party

Statistics

Let us summarize this year's issue of the sustainability week with in total 61 events happening between Monday and Saturday in some more numbers. We asked event organisers to provide us with feedback from their events, both in terms of attendance, and suggestions on how we, as Lead Team, could improve the organisation of the Week. This we can use to gain insights in the development of the Week, the expectations of attendees and event organizers, and therefore how to improve the Week in future editions.

More than half of the event organizers (38) provided us with helpful information from their events, as well as thoughtful feedback. We had an average visitor count of 46.3 visitors per event. This number is inflated thanks to some very popular and multi-day events such as the food save lunch. These are recorded in the overflow bin in the histogram displayed below. The median visitor count is 15 and aligns well with the histogram peaking around that number.



This year had more than 50% of events being a workshop which offers participants to exchange ideas in an open and free format, learn new skills, reflect on their behavior or exchange opinions. We had rather few “front talk” presentations and panel discussions which the Lead Team actively added upon after noticing the event type preference for workshops by this year's event organizers to compensate. The entire distribution of event types is shown in the pie chart above. The closing party, the food save lunch and the pubquiz were counted as fun and food events. Diverse contains events such as fasting or “walk-in” events such as the bike market or cloth swapping.

Next, we comment on the event locations: Due to the intent to focus a lot of attention and presence on the tents on Polyterrasse and the attempt to keep this location as occupied as possible with diverse events, about half the events took place there. The chart below showing the event location distribution emphasizes that we did not fail to host events at every institutes of higher education in Zurich. The number for ZHAW is deflated since the Sustainability day on this week's Tuesday was mostly organized independently by their students, advertised in our program and only counted as one event, even though several events took place in Winterthur that day.



Lastly, the simple pie chart above emphasizes our international attitude including foreign students in our events and discussing the multi-facetted challenges related to sustainability with people from diverse backgrounds. This offers local students with German as their mother tongue to train their English skills in interdisciplinary situations while of course also allowing them to host their events in German.

Finances

Balance, Income and Expenses

Balance Sheet 2024/25

Assets (Aktiven)	CHF 70'300	Liabilities (Passiven)	CHF 70'300
1. Cash	CHF 70'300	2. Equity	CHF 70'300
Transaction account (ABS)	CHF 54'401	Association's capital	CHF 52'300
Savings account (ABS)	CHF 15'899	NHW Fund	CHF 18'000

Status 21.5.2025.

Income Statement 2024/25: For the fiscal year ending 21 May 2025

Income transaction account - regarding NHWZ 2024	ETH	CHF 11'500
	UZH	CHF 4'250
	PHZH	CHF 6'500
	ZHAW	CHF 9'500
	ZHdK	CHF 2'500
	VSN, FDD, FSS	CHF 0
	Total donations	CHF 34'250

Status 21.5.2025.

Income transaction account - regarding NHWZ 2025	ETH	CHF 0 (provisional)
	UZH	CHF 0 (provisional)
	PHZH	CHF 0 (provisional)
	ZHAW	CHF 0 (provisional)
	ZHdK	CHF 0 (provisional)
	Account Interest (-tax)	CHF 130.75 - 45.80
	Total donations	CHF 84.95

Status 21.5.2025.

Expenses Statement 2024/25: For the fiscal year ending 21 May 2025

Expenses transaction account	Ressorts	
	Infrastructure	CHF -11'499.75
	Marketing	CHF -3'183.91
	Secretariat	CHF -4'381.15
	Program	CHF -5'178.01
	Other	
	NHW Fund	CHF -270.00
	NHWWeekend	CHF -2'150.08
	Leftover expenses from NHWZ 2024	CHF -3'558.95
	Account management	CHF -120.00
	Total expenses	CHF -30'341.77
Net income transaction account	Income – expenses	CHF 3'908.23

Status 21.5.2025.

Income savings account	Account interest	CHF 79.10
Expenses savings account		
	Total expenses	CHF 0
Net income savings account	Income - expenses	CHF 79.10

Status 21.5.2025.

The fiscal year 2024/25 was closed on May 21, 2025 with an amount of CHF 54'401 in the association's transaction account and CHF 15'899 in the savings account. This roughly amounts to the split between the association's capital (which is to be used for the organization of the Sustainability Week and related events) and the NHW Fund (to be used in supporting student-led initiatives and projects related to sustainability, external to the Sustainability Week itself).

Expenses directly corresponding to Sustainability Week 2025 amounted to CHF 24'242, while other expenses amounted to CHF 6'099. Together, they amounted to 30'342, close to the budgeted amount of CHF 30'000 approved by the 2024 General Assembly. Moreover, considering that over CHF 3'500 correspond to expenses from Sustainability Week 2024 which had to be paid after closure of the 2023/24 fiscal year, our association has kept within its approved 2024/25 budget. All known expenses for the past fiscal year have been paid, so the balance sheet should represent an accurate image of the organization's financial situation.

Auditor's Certificate

As the elected auditor for the association year 2024/25 of the association Nachhaltigkeitswoche Zürich, I have reviewed the fiscal year closed on the 21st of May 2025. The accounts were audited on the basis of a thorough analysis. The expenditures of NHWZ members are in line with the mission of the organization. The balance sheet and the income statement coincide with the accounting records. In my opinion, the accounting records and the financial statements comply with the legal and statutory requirements.



Zurich, 21th of May 2025
Lukas Zink

Outlook

Ever since its inception, Sustainability Week Zurich emerged over the years as a truly Zurich based inter-university student initiative. The association not only caters to students of one field, interested in sustainability themes of their particular discipline, but to students of all fields and interests. Most importantly, association is as much led by students from ETH and UZH, as by students from ZHdK making films about waste production and PH's and ZHAW students enthusiastic about sustainability from very distinct disciplinary and personal backgrounds. This way, Sustainability Week Zurich differentiates itself as a very inclusive and one of a kind initiative.

This year in particular, we made a special effort to increase the visibility of sustainability topics by pitching two large tents on Polyterrasse. While there was certainly room for improvement in the overall organisation of the tent space, we want to stick with that idea and make it happen again next year.

Future Funding

While our current finances are healthy, the long-term financial situation of the association is far from secure. It must be noted that the Letter of Intent (LOI) which secured financial support from all of Zurich's higher education institutions (ETH, UZH, PHZH, ZHdK and ZHAW) ran out in 2024. While we are making efforts to secure further funding, universities seem hesitant to make any promises.

This is understandable in a context when the universities themselves are facing budgetary reductions from a state level - nonetheless, we hope that the universities recognise the importance of sustainability and the platform we give students to promote it beyond the public attention the topic receives.

Therefore, we will continue dialoguing with the universities and sharing our vision: that empowering students to pursue their ideas is the most impactful way to foster long-term environmental, societal and economic progress and well-being. With over 100 event organizers and over 2'800 attendees just this year, our association has demonstrated the power of its motto "by students, for students" to achieve wide outreach and guarantee that sustainability and long-term thinking stay in the conversation, even in difficult times.